

Chapter 3

GROWING SUCCESSFUL NEIGHBORHOODS

What is a successful neighborhood?

**Why are some Lexington neighborhoods set apart
as great places to live?**

**How can all of Lexington's neighborhoods be
great and successful?**



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Lexington's neighborhoods are lively and diverse places with histories, personalities, stories, famous residents, unique businesses, local restaurants and ethnicities. People choose their neighborhood for many reasons, including housing affordability and the test scores of nearby schools. They may buy a house for investment reasons. People may identify with their neighborhood because their parents lived there, and they hope their children will too. To them, their neighborhood defines who they are; it is part of their heritage. When people move into a neighborhood, they inherit the pride and identity associated with it that has been established over generations. In new neighborhoods, people have the opportunity to create their own history.

Neighborhoods are the environments in which our children grow and thrive. They are where we live our lives. Neighborhoods that have a lot of people walking and people moving around, access to greenspace, and a strong social network are the kinds of places that build physical, social, mental and emotional health and well-being.

The physical layout and visual cues that make a neighborhood unique start with its form. The ideal structure of a neighborhood is composed of places to reside, work, shop, learn and play. How these spaces are organized and relate to one another influences public health, cultural expression, environmental health, safety and economic vitality.

It takes a community effort to build and maintain a successful neighborhood. The effort is heightened when a neighborhood has declined, is experiencing loss, or is no longer attracting new residents and investment. At its core, the 2013 Comprehensive Plan promotes neighborhood prosperity and success. It provides the tools to ensure that all neighborhoods - old and new, thriving and in decline - are given full access to paths to success.

Land Use: Great Neighborhoods by Design

How does design help a neighborhood succeed?

- * Creates a sense of place and identity
- * Increases safety and security

What does the 2013 Comprehensive Plan recommend?

- * Provide a variety of housing types in all neighborhoods
- * Provide access from housing to parks, greenways and neighborhood centers
- * Place the fronts of housing towards parks and open space.

An outcome of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan was a directed staff review of development standards to determine what changes to existing regulations could lead to improvements for new neighborhoods. The New Development Character and Design Work Group recommended a planning and regulatory framework that will help create Great Neighborhoods in newly developing or redeveloping areas.

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These neighborhoods will have a clear sense of place when the following standards are met:

- ✦ Inviting streetscape
- ✦ Varied housing choice
- ✦ Abundant private and public open space
- ✦ Neighborhood focal points
- ✦ Quality connections with parks, schools and stores

The work group drafted a process to evaluate new neighborhoods with clearly defined and objective criteria. The criteria could be applied to greenfield developments or large redevelopment sites, such as Turfland Mall.

To begin, the project team conducted a literature review of Planning Best Practices to identify the characteristics that comprise well-designed and highly functional neighborhoods, which include:

Inviting Streetscapes

Transportation networks and the design of the public rights-of-way affect the character of surrounding areas, neighborhood livability and community cohesion. Streetscapes can play an important role in reinforcing the positive attributes of a community or neighborhood. Through place-making, they create new positive spaces and identities.

Place-making and walkability are important to the success of Lexington and its neighborhoods. A variety of [best-practice reviews](#) show that property values tend to be higher in more walkable

neighborhoods that contain a mix of nearby destinations connected by pedestrian-friendly streets.

A complete streets approach to roadway design in Lexington's neighborhoods can improve walkability by providing direct and easy access for residents to local destinations by foot to reduce the need for car trips. Street trees, sidewalks, adequate landscape buffers, pedestrian-scaled lighting and appropriate pavement widths discourage speeding and the need for costly traffic calming retrofits.

Traffic speeds dramatically affect a pedestrian's actual and perceived sense of safety as well as the quality of life in neighborhoods.

Likewise, speeding is a common concern for residents. Pedestrians struck by a motor vehicle traveling at 40 miles per hour are fatally injured 85 percent of the time. Speeds at 30 mph reduce the risk of death to 45 percent. Only 5 percent of pedestrians struck by vehicles traveling at 20 mph are fatally injured. It is important, therefore, to reduce vehicle speeds in high pedestrian activity areas, such as neighborhoods, commercial areas, schools and parks.

Vehicle speeds are heavily influenced by roadway design regardless of the posted speed limit. Narrow, curvilinear street with on-street parking and street trees help to slow traffic and create a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. Residential streets that are overly wide and straight and lack a vertical edge, such as trees or buildings, enable fast moving traffic.

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Urban Forestry

The urban forest provides many environmental, social and economic benefits to the neighborhood, community and property owner. Trees are the **most effective way** to protect and maintain an urban ecosystem. They reduce the heat island effect, clean the air, absorb carbon dioxide, slow and absorb water runoff and help control soil erosion. They provide food, shelter, nesting sites and protection for birds and other animals. Trees increase property values and enhance neighborhoods. Street trees unify a block and provide a sense of scale and buffering from the street. An updated tree canopy inventory would provide important information about the status of the urban forest and establish a baseline for future measurements to ensure we meet the **national guideline** of 30 percent tree canopy coverage for residential areas. A comprehensive Urban Forestry Management Plan should be developed to provide strategies for reaching canopy coverage goals and guide LFUCG for the best management care of public trees.

The urban forest can be found in neighborhoods along street, in natural areas, parks and other greenspaces and in residential and commercial landscaping. There are few tree stands over one acre in the Urban Service Area, and their condition may be compromised due to invasive species. For a time, neighborhoods were not required to include street trees.

The **Reforest the Bluegrass** program has successfully enlisted over 10,000 volunteers to plant 100,000 seedlings in 180 acres of floodplains. The survival rate of these trees has been significant enough to add to tree canopy coverage, restore habitat, improve water and air quality and reduce the need to mow. On a smaller scale, new street tree planing is ongoing along major arterials through the LFUCG Corridors Committee. The **2012 Empower Lexington Plan** includes a voluntary program for improving energy usage through urban forestry.

Varied Housing Choice

By providing housing choices within a neighborhood, residents of a community have greater options of where to live, particularly when the components of housing choice include access to jobs and schools, affordability, and housing type. Diverse neighborhoods feature townhomes, apartments and condominiums and duplex housing adjacent and mixed with single-family homes. They provide the opportunity for more personal interaction and **security**. The added population of higher-density residential development increases the viability of neighborhood commercial development as well.

Abundant Open Spaces

Over the years, green infrastructure has continued to play a role in shaping Lexington's urban form through conscious decisions on where to protect greenspace, cultural resources, and natural resources. While most of these greenspaces and resources in Lexington are isolated from each other, patches of greenspace are integral to the urban landscape, especially at the neighborhood scale. Greenspace is key to successful neighborhoods. An interconnected and accessible green infrastructure system consisting of vibrant and attractive public spaces, healthy natural areas and plentiful recreation opportunities create neighborhoods where people want to live.

The **Greenspace Plan** describes greenspace as more than rural landscapes. Greenspace encompasses urban parks, greenways, boulevards and historic sites. Neighborhoods such as Gratz Park, Bell Court, Woodland Park, Ashland Park and Downtown are recognized as greenspaces because they contribute to the overall Bluegrass identity. Indicative of Lexington's roots, settlement patterns for these

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older neighborhoods as well as others, such as Northside, Western Suburb, and Mulberry Hill, are characterized by narrower interconnected streets and sidewalks and structures oriented towards the street or park, which create a vibrant relationship with the public domain. Examples of greenspaces located within neighborhoods may include:

- * Public Parks
- * Trails
- * Natural areas, including greenways and urban forest
- * Golf courses
- * Church lawns
- * School grounds
- * Green streets, including boulevards and other scenic corridors
- * Open spaces, such as landscaped plazas, courtyards, amphitheaters and stormwater basins
- * National Register and local historic sites and districts
- * The Arboretum
- * Cemeteries
- * Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate
- * Office parks
- * College campuses

There is not a standardized measure for determining the amount of greenspace required for a neighborhood. In the past, park and open space planning relied on national standards based on acreage, distance and persons served per sport. National trends are moving away from ascribed standards in favor of flexibility to change with demographics and demands. The old neighborhood park model no

Development Incentives

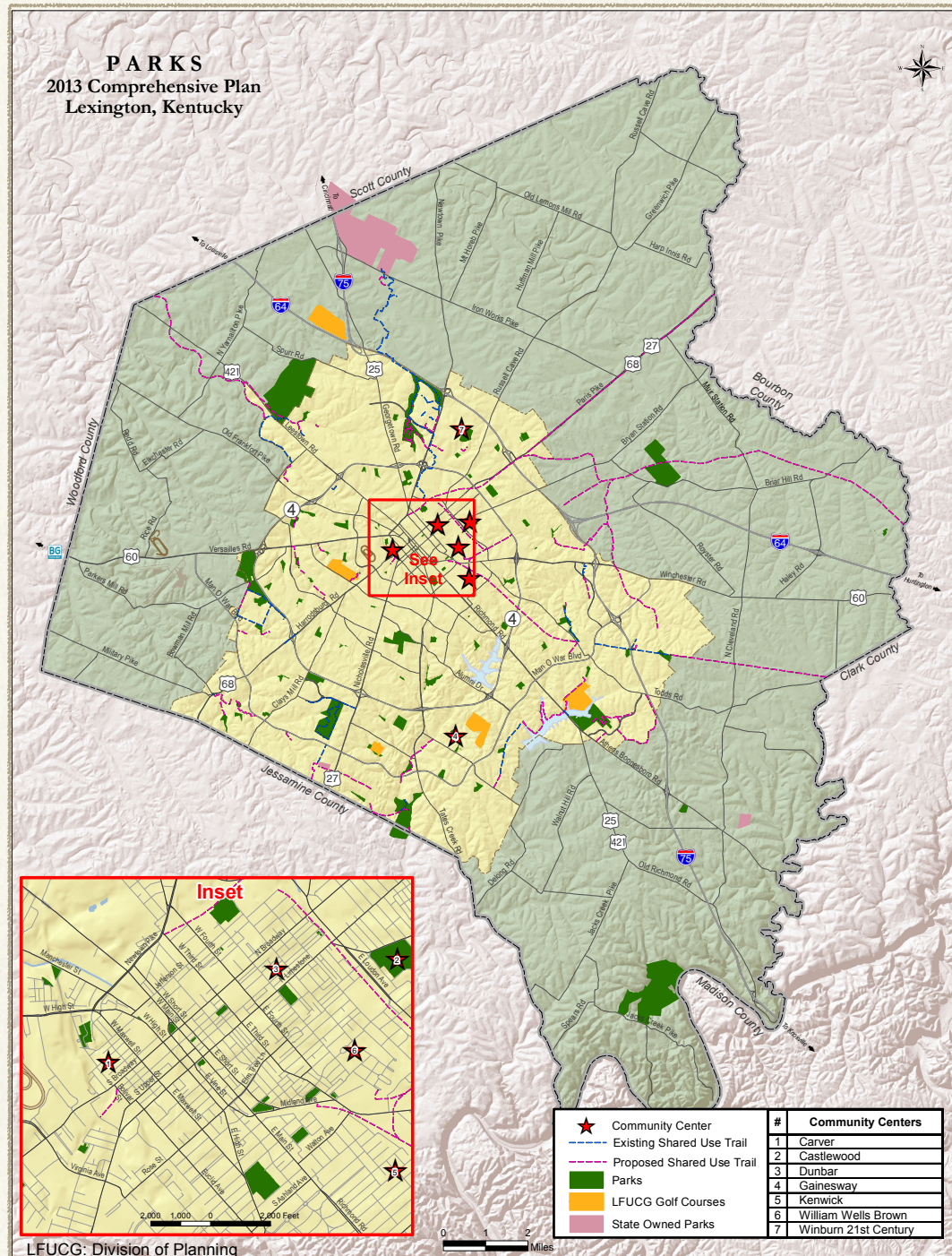
The Urban County Government has a role in supporting a better life for its citizens and helping to build resilient communities.

This role includes making and enforcing the rules for development for the benefit of the community. In order to build great and successful neighborhoods, it would be useful to identify financial, regulatory, and operational incentives that encourage innovative developments. The following list of incentives is not necessarily inclusive, but is a starting point for discussion:

- * Review the Zoning Ordinance for impediments to the development of successful neighborhoods with an eye towards retooling zoning categories that are not fulfilling their potential.
- * Enable the Division of Planning staff to approve final record plats.
- * Establish an objective and standardized process to evaluate new developments for neighborhood character that, if met, would expedite approval of the the development.
- * Convene a summit of financial and neighborhood development leaders in order to increase understanding of the financial costs and challenges to funding mixed-use, multi-family, and innovative developments.
- * Ensure the exaction fees are reviewed and revised to meet the infrastructure needs of the Expansion Area.
- * Establish partnership opportunities by funding the Land Bank and creating an affordable housing trust fund.
- * Pursue Federal and state funding for high-cost projects of a community interest, such as bridges and community centers.

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Map 3.1 Parks



Southland and Townley

Several neighborhoods possess at least some of the important place making characteristics, including one that was developed decades ago and other one that is on the rise:

Southland to Pasadena

The neighborhoods between Southland and Pasadena Drives and Clays Mill Road and Eastway Drive, and including the streets near Lafayette High School have streets connected in a grid. The southland Drive commercial area is accessible from four points.

Neighborhood parks are integrated well into the surrounding community and are easily accessible through all forms of transportation. With two parks and the commercial area on Southland Drive within one mile, citizens can meet most of their daily needs locally. Parts of this area are more than 70 years old, yet new and redevelopment continues to occur.

Townley and Meadowthorpe

Townley Center, no more than a decade old, and the decades-old Meadowthorpe are complement each other as an edge community. The area blends older post-war residential with a will integrated neighborhood shopping center and larger shopping center with a major grocery store, banks restaurants and other shopping

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longer works since different neighborhoods demand different types of parks, some of which are not developed for contemporary needs.

To ensure that a greenspace is properly sized, located and preserved so that its intended use best serve a neighborhood will require more integration with the planning process and flexible greenspace and open space regulations. Considerations include:

- ✦ Parks geographically and strategically located as determined by conservation, recreation and open space needs of the neighborhood.
- ✦ Parks and greenspace located to fill gaps in the green infrastructure network.
- ✦ Parks and greenspace needs in the expansion area and Downtown
- ✦ Public greenspace size and location in neighborhoods with higher densities and smaller residential lots
- ✦ Opportunities for new trails, parks and greenspace in new and redevelopment area
- ✦ Flexible greenspace and open space regulations
- ✦ Greenspace in neighborhood parks for leisure and non-structured play and to protect natural resources.
- ✦

Neighborhood Focal Points

The character of neighborhood is made of more than a collection of bricks and shingles. Character encompasses a broad array of qualities. A focal point can be a gathering point such as a park, a shopping center, a community center or public square. To the extent possible, new residential development should be developed to

Secure By Design

Secure by Design focuses on crime prevention for homes and commercial premises and promotes the use of security standards for a wide range of applications and products. Where Secure by Design programs have been implemented, crime has been reduced through standards of physical security and well-tested principles of natural surveillance and defensible space. The program recommends collecting and evaluating crime data for areas of new development and showing how new developments will address crime through design. The data would be reported much like traffic or storm water analysis are presently reported for new developments. The report would include basic demographic information and code violations in the area as well as crime reports. One of the goals of the early reporting is to dispel misinformation and to account for people's fears. Secure by Design research has found that if people are afraid of a land use, they will not use it. Secure by Design seeks to ensure that safety principles are baked in the plans from the beginning in order to set the stage for a successful outcome for the development.

accommodate future site by allowing for easy, multimodal access from the neighborhood instead of development that turns its back on a community center.

Quality Connections with Parks, Schools and Stores

Connecting our neighborhoods, both from within and to other neighborhoods contributes to the overall efficiency of the entire transportation system. Local surveys often identify traffic congestion as a common concern for Lexington residents. The impact of street connectivity, therefore, is significantly misunderstood. Sixty percent of Lexington's roadway system consists of local streets, so their role in overall system efficiency is important, particularly with respect to

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serving localized trips. A disconnected street system means that arterial and collector streets carry large volumes of traffic as they must be used for most trips, even short, local trips. Congestion on major arterials increases traffic collision rates and leads to wide, heavily trafficked streets that are uncomfortable to walk or bicycle along and difficult to cross - especially for children, the elderly and people with disabilities.

Citizens often seek cul-de-sac and loop streets because they carry low traffic volumes. The disconnected street patterns, though, funnel traffic onto the few connected streets within a neighborhood. A complete street network disperses traffic more uniformly so that all streets carry their share of localized traffic. This means that safety and livability benefits are dispensed to the greatest number of households throughout a neighborhood as less traffic is carried on each individual street.

Connectivity is important because it provides for direct routes. Direct connections reduce the overall time and distance we travel. This is important in reducing the total number of vehicular miles driven in a community and helps provide critical services to our neighborhoods in a timely and efficient manner. Streets that are not connected increase the distance and response time for fire, police and ambulance services. It can also require service vehicles to backtrack.

Street connectivity correlates to how people in a community choose to travel from place to place. Pedestrians and bicyclists are sensitive to travel time and distance, thus out-of-direction travel discourages travel by these modes. A study of 24 California communities showed that communities with highly connected street patterns have an average 16 percent walk/bicycle/transit mode share compared to a 4

percent mode share in communities with disconnected street patterns (Garrick and Marshall 2008)

Recommendations for New Policies and Strategies

- ❖ Establish an objective and standardized process to evaluate new developments for neighborhood character.
- ❖ Create development regulations that locate higher density housing nearest public open space.
- ❖ Collaborate with financial agencies, homebuilders, affordable housing providers, and others to identify practical incentives that enable the design of great neighborhoods, which includes a mix of housing and affordability.
- ❖ Develop street design standards that will increase safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- ❖ Create design measures that reduce congestion by connecting neighborhoods to collector and arterial roads.
- ❖ Review policies for providing parks and greenspace in the Expansion Area and Downtown to determine if they meet the needs of residents.
- ❖ Develop a comprehensive Urban Forestry Program and Urban Forestry Management Plan.
- ❖ Ensure that park locations are desirable and appropriate.

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Land Use: Old Neighborhoods and New Opportunities through Small Area Planning

How does Small Area Planning contribute to a Desirable Community?

- * Guides growth and development in order to promote neighborhood stabilization and revitalization
- * Addresses the needs and issues in the study area and provides specific plans
- * Can be a catalyst for creating a sense of place and economic opportunity and getting quality food to underserved areas

What does the 2013 Comprehensive Plan Recommend?

- * Create a Small Area Plan for communities with higher than common poverty and reduced access to quality food.

Small Area Planning is a staple of neighborhood planning in Lexington. Neighborhoods are identified for targeted planning for a variety of reasons, including challenging demographics, anticipated changes that could alter the character of the neighborhood and underinvestment by public or private agencies. Small Area Plans are intended to guide growth and development in order to promote neighborhood stabilization and revitalization. These plans may include community design, identification of infill and redevelopment opportunities and areas where new development can take place. The process includes the identification of the area to be studied, a survey of land use patterns, and a review of public facilities and the cultural and social conditions of the defined area. The SAP

should be responsive to the conditions, needs, and issues of concern in the study area to clearly define preferred land uses and a path to desirability.

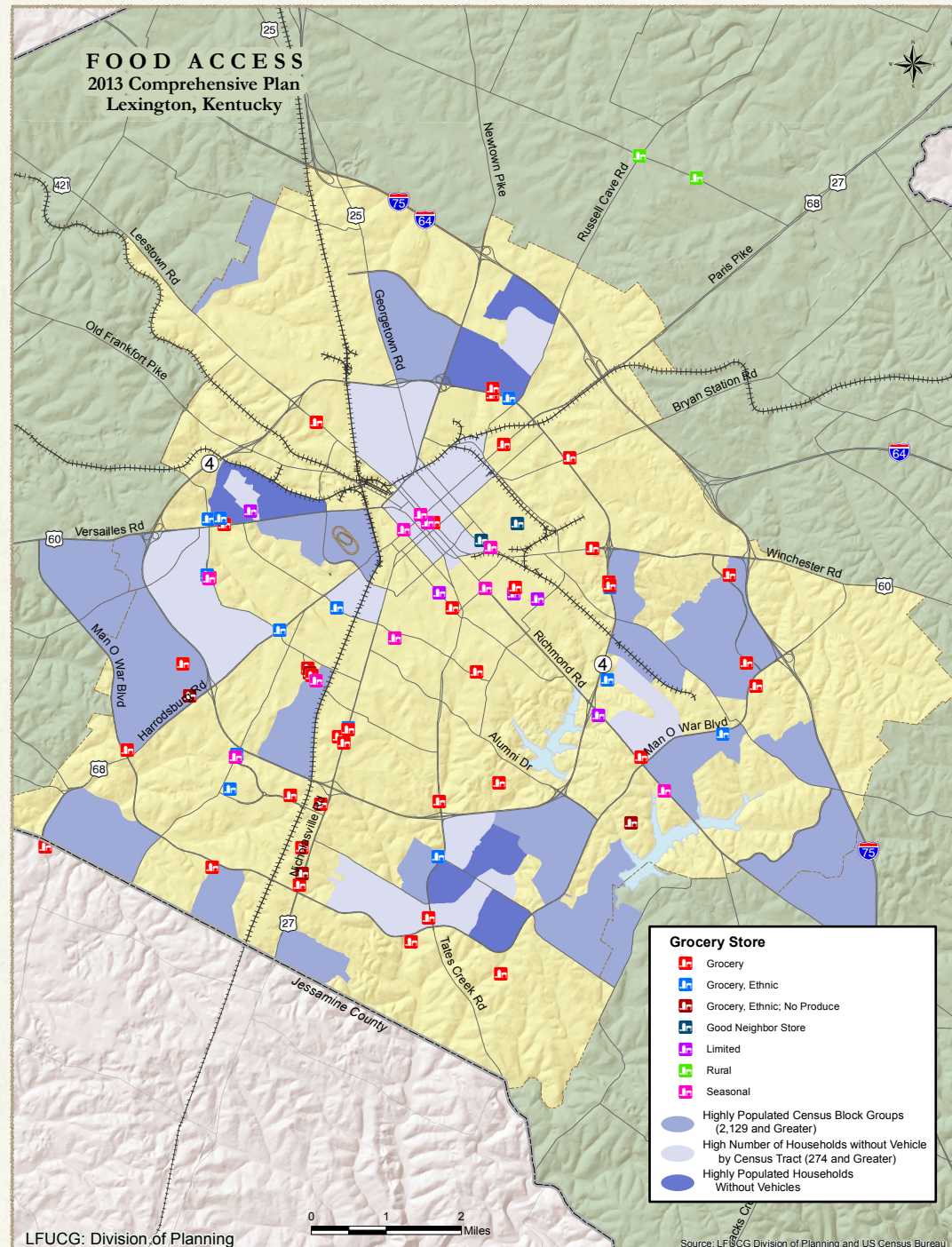
Desirable communities in Lexington possess a number of characteristics, including access to transportation, jobs, and quality food. Where large numbers of citizens do not have cars and good affordable food is not easily accessible, individual health and neighborhood stability are compromised. Unhealthy people, poverty, and increased crime are common companions. It can be useful to evaluate these issues through a small area plan.

The communities described in this section have higher than common poverty rates, lower than common access to cars and reduced access to quality food. Major grocery retailers select their sites based on many marketing factors, with one being a sufficient spending population at a certain income level. Spending habit data is usually collected and analyzed from credit card use. In areas where credit cards are not as prevalent, it may be difficult to show there is sufficient household income to support a grocery store. In other cities, an agency, such as a Community Development Corporation, has been necessary to coordinate information and financing to attract retail and other useful services to an area. A new grocery store in an underserved area provides access to fresh food and jobs.

Efforts to strengthen other areas in Lexington with challenging socioeconomic issues have been reviewed through the [2009 Central Sector and East End Small Area Plans](#).

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Map 3.2 Food Access



Winburn, Green Acres, Hollow Creek, Breckenridge

This area has a high number of households with no vehicle, large household populations, and is among the highest in Lexington with households living below the national poverty level. A number of underutilized properties in the Winburn neighborhood are zoned and have infrastructure for retail development, but lack a full-service grocery store. Connectivity is incomplete for cars and pedestrians between the neighborhoods and the arterial roads.

According to the 2010 Census there were 128 vacant housing units in Winburn. Housing vacancy, available housing stock, housing affordability, vacant land use recommendations, and food access and other services could be addressed by a small area plan.

Winburn already has many components of a neighborhood center, including a park, school and churches within walking distance. An emphasis on creating a sense of place by incorporating and enhancing a public gathering place within the Winburn neighborhood among the non-residential uses, especially access to food, may help revitalize this neighborhood and decrease the housing vacancy. Connectivity to the southern neighborhoods and arterial roads is important to support any residential uses in Winburn.

Cardinal Valley, Oxford Circle, Versailles Road, West Side of Red Mile Road

The Cardinal Valley area has a large number of households with no vehicle, high household populations, and high poverty. The grocery store on Village Drive is more than a one-mile walk around a cemetery for the nearest residents and much farther for others.

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Oxford Circle is a commercial area that has several small vacant parcels and underutilized parking lots, but excellent connectivity to the streets in this neighborhood. Even though this commercial area is bisected by a floodplain, it appears there could be development opportunities.

While there is high population density, a portion of this area has a high level of housing unit vacancy. There appear to be opportunities for transit-oriented development and for neighborhood center improvements, such as a public plaza or park.

Areas south of Versailles Road and west of Red Mile Road include a high number of residents living below poverty level and a moderately high number of households with no vehicles. Much of this population is college students, so lower income would be expected. It also includes social service agencies and assisted housing. The **Red Mile Development Plan** proposes retail within the mix of uses which could provide grocery access for this area, especially for pedestrians. The area west of Red Mile Road, therefore, should be included with the Carinal Valley area for targeted planning.

Centre Parkway, Gainesway, Armstrong Mill

This area bounded by Tates Creek Road, New Circle Road, Alumni Drive, and Man o' War Boulevard includes neighborhoods ranked high for households with no vehicle, high density households, and moderately high poverty. There is no easy access to the closest grocery store for many of the residents.

There are numerous churches in this area as well as parks and schools. There is very little vacant land or property inventoried as underutilized; however, there are a number of non-residential

buildings and open/green spaces. A small area plan would look for impediments to local commercial development. With the schools, churches and parks, there is potential to create a walkable transit-oriented neighborhood center.

Corridor and Buffer along Citation Boulevard

Nearly every household in this area has a car, which improves access to quality food for the 12,000 people who live here. There are prominent parcels along the Citation corridor at Leestown and Georgetown Roads that have remained vacant and underdeveloped despite their commercial land use designations. There is very little poverty in the area.

There are a number of churches, schools and other non-residential uses such as employment and retail in the area. Masterson Station Park is minimally accessible to the adjacent via greenway trail. Opportunities may exist to create one or two neighborhood centers or one larger community center, and the inclusion of a major grocery store located at a site centrally located to the residential development.

Recommendations for new Small Area Plans

- ❖ Centre Parkway, Gainesway, Armstrong Mill
- ❖ Winburn, Green Acres, Hollow Creek, Breckenridge
- ❖ Cardinal Valley, Oxford Circle, Versailles Road, West side of Red Mile Road
- ❖ Proposed and existing Citation Boulevard corridor and buffer